ERIC Document Resume | See Instruction Sheet | DATE OF RESUME 7/8/65 | DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1a. ERIC NUMBER ED 003285 | 2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S). 7017 | 3. IDENTIFICATION NO. N.A. | DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S): Axt, Richard G.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Institutional Research and University Business Officers or New Bottles for Old Wine

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N...

7. EDITOR(S): N...

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN: ORG. WICHE; ST. Fleming Law Bldg.; CITY Univ. of Colorado; STATE Boulder, Colorado; INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	60	

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE: YES X NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED: YES ☐ NO X

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED: YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT: PROPOSAL ☐ IN-PROGRESS ☐ FINAL X FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

research P-37	case study R-42	
administration R-06	responsibility P-40	
personnel P-09		

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Reviews the content and organization of institutional research studies in the West and discusses the role of the business officer in relation to such research. Cites six recent publications concerned with self-studies and reviews the experiences of three universities as illustrations of different ways in which institutional research may be organized.

ERIC No. | 18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

7017

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND UNIVERSITY BUSINESS OFFICERS OR NEW BOTTLES FOR OLD WINE

Richard G. Axt, Associate Director
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

IV - 1

By institutional research I mean institutional self-studies done by colleges and universities.

Institutional research is done on such areas of college operation as finance, business management, students, faculty, curriculum, physical plant, admissions policy, teaching methods, and the over-all administration and organization of the institution.

Institutional research can range in scope from the one or two day "crash" collection of information all the way to a full-scale survey of the entire institution's program and facilities. The full-scale survey sometimes takes two or three years to complete and may plan the institution's future ten or fifteen years ahead. Most institutional research falls somewhere in between these two extremes.

As college and university business officers, you have done institutional research for many years, although you probably have not called such activity by that name.

In fact, at most colleges and universities it is only very recently that the phrase "institutional research" has come to be used as the designation for most kinds of institutional self study.

I can recall three instances which will illustrate the various meanings which have been given to the phrase institutional research and will point up the need to pin down the particular meaning it has rapidly come to have in the field of university and college self study.

Until four years ago, I held a position at the National Science Foundation called "study director for institutional research" which had absolutely nothing to do with institutional research as we are discussing it today. What we studied at NSF were the scientific research expenditures and programs of colleges, universities, and other non-profit "institutions."

An address to the Western Association of College and University Business Officers, May 3, 1960.

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As a second instance, most of you are familiar with the Joint Office of Institutional Research, sponsored by the Land-Grant College and State University Associations, and directed by Allan Ostar. While this office collects data and conducts research on higher education, it has not primarily been interested in institutional self-study by colleges and universities.

As a third instance, I will draw upon a study conducted by the Western Interstate Commission and which I will have occasion to refer to again. In 1958-59 we surveyed institutional self-study at Western colleges and universities. The results of this survey were published in a little book by my colleague Hall T. Sprague, Institutional Research in the West; a report of a survey of institutional self-studies at Western colleges and universities.

As the initial step in this survey, a covering letter explaining what we meant by institutional research was sent to the president of each college and university in the West. Enclosed with the letter was a return post card which asked for the name of the official who would be responsible for providing the detailed answers to the survey. One large scientifically-oriented institution in the southern part of California returned the post card, in the president's handwriting and signed by the distinguished president himself, which said, "We have nothing to report." That was the last we heard from them. Shortly thereafter, Bob Bokelman of the Office of Education received a salary questionnaire from this very same institution indicating that they had a full-time "institutional research officer" at a rather substantial salary. Further inquiry indicated that this institutional research officer was in fact concerned with the financial and administrative aspects of Federal scientific research contracts and grants, rather than with institutional self-study.

I cite these instances to emphasize the relatively new use of the phrase institutional research as it applies to institutional self-study by colleges and universities.

A few universities, notably the University of Minnesota and the University of Illinois, have had offices for institutional self-study which have been called bureaus of institutional research for several decades. Nationally, however, it is only in the last two years that books and articles on institutional self-study have begun consistently to use the phrase institutional research. I believe that it is a convenient phrase and one that we all ought to agree upon as convenient shorthand for a wide range of self-study activities at colleges and universities.

In this paper, I will draw on six recent publications about institutional self-study. The first I have already mentioned, Institutional Research in the West. This was published by WICHE in March 1959.

Secondly, there is a summary of a number of comprehensive institutional self-studies done by liberal arts colleges with grants from the Fund for the Advancement of Education in Robert S. Donaldson, Fortifying Higher Education: A Story of College Self Studies. This was published by the Fund for the Advancement of Education in September 1959.

Those of you from land-grant colleges and state universities will be particularly interested in a report on Institutional Research Concerning Land Grant Institutions and State Universities, written by W. Hugh Stickler and published by the Joint Office of Institutional Research.

WICHE's counterpart in the South, the Southern Regional Education Board, published a report on The Role of the Registrar in Institutional Research by Rollin E. Godfrey in July 1959. Unfortunately, no one has done a similar study of the role of business officers in institutional research; otherwise my task today would have been easier.

Elmer D. West, Director of the Office of Statistical Information and Research of the American Council on Education, issues a series of "Reports on Current Institutional Research." The first of these came out in May 1958. This series reports on institutional research currently under way.

The Office of Education has set up a Clearing House of Studies on Higher Education. The Clearing House has issued two publications, one called the Reporter and the other called Special Reports. These documents list and summarize completed and published institutional research and other research on colleges and universities.

And lastly, just this week, the American Council on Education published a report entitled Research Designed to Improve Institutions of Higher Learning by A. J. Brumbaugh, whom many of you know.[1]

All of these publications should be of direct interest to college and university business officers.

The reason for the recent interest in self-study by colleges and universities will be immediately apparent to college and university business officers. I need cite no statistics to you on the rising tide of enrollments,

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1. This book uses the phrase institutional research in every chapter heading but not in the title. The author and publisher felt, quite rightly, that many of the persons whom it was designed to reach, such as university presidents and members of boards of trustees, would be more likely to read it if it had a more immediately descriptive title.

on the level of faculty salaries, on inflation, or on the need for and cost of building new facilities. The dimensions of these problems are all too familiar to you. Similarly, the interest of the general public, of members of boards of trustees, and of philanthropists in financial information about colleges and universities needs no further elaboration. And those of you who are from state universities and colleges are aware, often painfully so, of the growing interest of legislative and executive officials in detailed studies of unit costs, space utilization, and the like.

I will, therefore, direct my remarks to the content and organization of institutional research in colleges and universities in the Western region, and to the relationship of college and university business officers to institutional research.

The Content of Institutional Research

In Sprague's study, Institutional Research in the West, we received replies from 127 Western colleges and universities and these replies reported on exactly 600 recent individual self-studies at these institutions.

The content of these studies were classified under nine major headings. The number and per cent of studies in each of the categories was as follows:

	Category	Per Cent
1.	Students (145 studies)	24
2.	Faculty (94 studies)	16
3.	Curriculum (93 studies)	15
4.	Plant (69 studies)	11
5.	Enrollment (49 studies)	9
6.	Administration and organization (47 studies)	8
7.	Teaching methods (36 studies)	6
8.	Admissions policies (32 studies)	5
9.	Finance, as such (27 studies)	5
10.	Other (8 studies)	1

We were not surprised to find the category "teaching methods" a relatively small one in this survey.

We were, however, somewhat surprised to find so few studies reported in the area of college and university finance. College and university business officers have been doing self-studies of various kinds for a good many years. The back files of College and University Business have reports of many such studies.

In looking into this apparent anomaly (by checking the detailed descriptions of the 600 studies) three reasons appeared to explain the small number of studies listed under finance. I mention these reasons because I think they have a bearing on the role of the university or college business officer in institutional research.

In the first place, it appeared that a number of studies that could just as well have been categorized under "finance" were categorized by the institutions under other categories. For example, under the category "faculty" we found a good many studies of faculty salary schedules and of retirement benefits that not only had a direct bearing on finance but in perhaps half the cases had actually been conducted by the college or university business office.

Much the same could be said of the category "plant," including both utilization of present plant and the planning of future plant, and of the category "administration and organization," where there appeared several studies of non-academic personnel.

A second reason, possibly, is the fact that the persons who responded for the institutions rarely were the business or financial officers. The respondents may have assumed that much that goes on in the business offices of colleges and universities is a part of the "regular operation" of those offices and somehow is not usually institutional research as we have defined it. I do not subscribe to this assumption but suspect that it may have been a factor in our survey process.

Finally, I think it can be said that financial data, salary data for example, by its very nature is often for internal use and is not published.

It is also possible, I suppose, that college and university business officers don't have quite as much time to write articles as do some other institutional officials.

At any rate, I would conclude that close to half of the 600 studies reported to us bore directly on the business management or financial aspects of the reporting institutions and that a substantial proportion, perhaps a fourth, were actually done by a college or university business or finance officer.

The difference between this estimate and the five per cent which were categorized in "finance" illustrates both the problem of categorizing institutional self-studies and the need to clarify the role of the college and university business officer in institutional research.

The Organization of Institutional Research

The WICHE study revealed that at most Western colleges and universities institutional research (in 1958-59) was very unorganized and decentralized. Stickler's study found much the same situation nationally.

Of the 127 responding institutions, only 8 reported that an official spent "full-time" coordinating institutional research. Even this figure probably overstates the case, because four of these persons were vice-presidents or deans who in all likelihood did not spend their full time coordinating institutional self-study. Thus there were only four "institutional research officers" reported as spending full time in this activity.

Seventeen additional institutions reported that an official spent part of his time coordinating institutional research on an institution-wide basis, and twelve reported that a committee either coordinated or reviewed institutional research on an institution-wide basis. Nine schools reported that they had central review of institutional research but no coordination as such.

The largest single group (58 schools) reported that their institutional research was decentralized; that is was carried out by a number of officers in the institution who distributed the results of their studies as they deemed appropriate.

Finally, twenty schools (one-sixth of the 127 who reported) said they did very little institutional research and that therefore no formal organization of it had been established.

But, there are indications that the organization of institutional research at Western colleges and universities has been in a period of rapid change since the academic year 1958-59. This change has been in the direction of greater central review and/or coordination of institutional research on an institution-wide basis.

For example, about twenty of the institutions which reported in 1958-59 said they were actively recruiting an official to review or help coordinate institutional research.

And at the Stanford Institute on Institutional Research last summer, which some 20 of you attended, there was active recruiting for "institutional research officers."

What are the implications of this apparent centralization of institutional research? Is it a good thing? And what does such centralization suggest about the role of the college and university business officer in institutional self-study?

Perhaps the most obvious inference one can draw is that the many chief administrative officers of Western colleges and universities, both public and private, feel that in this era of expansion and rising costs they must make sure that their institution has an adequate, well-planned and continuing program of institutional self-study. This, I think, is all to the good.

If the movement towards centralization of institutional research meant that one office in the university would do all of the institutional self-study or even that all institutional self-study would be done at the direction of one office; then I think such centralization would be a bad thing. This would be stultifying in a government or industrial organization and even worse in a college or university.

Fortunately, the centralization that is presently happening is in the direction of central review and coordination of research that is done, in most cases, by the appropriate officer of the university--be he the business manager, budget officer, director of buildings and grounds, registrar, dean of students, or dean of a professional school or college. This kind of coordination can help to bring about a more intense, more effective, institution-wide program of continuing self-study, and one with fewer gaps than is the case when self-study is left to the time, initiative, and particular interests of a large number of university officials.

Perhaps the experience and plans of three universities which have approached this somewhat differently will serve to illustrate the number of different ways a college or university can organize its institutional research program.

At the University of Minnesota there has been a Bureau of Education Research since 1942 and a Bureau of Institutional Research since 1947. This Bureau was started at largely faculty initiative, has been staffed largely by faculty members and research associates and historically has been interested in research on problems of direct concern to faculty, such as the faculty itself, the students, test scores, student achievement, conditions of faculty employment, the learning process, and so forth. Until recently, little research for "the administration" or on immediate pressing problems of the university was done by the Bureau. Such research was done rather by the business office or the registrar's office. Over the past few years, however, the Bureau at Minnesota has increasingly taken on self-study assignments at the request of one or the other administrative official of the University.

We could call the latter kind of administration-initiated research done by the Bureau "applied institutional research" in contrast to the fairly "basic" institutional research that the Bureau has historically done and which it still stresses. The main point here is the fact that whereas previously the institutional research at Minnesota was in two fairly water-tight compartments, the basic research in the Bureau and the on-going applied research elsewhere in the University, the Bureau now is becoming more involved in the operating problems of the University and is assisting various officials in the University at their request in assembling data and in making studies. (See Figure 1.)

At the University of Colorado an Office of Institutional Research was set up in 1957 and is headed by Dr. James I. Doi. You will be interested in the organization chart of this office (Figure 2) because it illustrates still another approach to the institution-wide organization of institutional research. The following statement spells out the organization of the Colorado office.

"In 1958, at the request of the director of institutional research, there was established an Administrative Committee on Institutional Research. This Committee functions in an advisory capacity to the Office of Institutional Research on policies and programs. It also assumes an administrative role in the organization of special University self-study committees, coordinates the activities of these committees, and controls their budgets. Its membership includes: Vice President for the University, chairman; Dean of Faculties; Director of Budget and Planning; Secretary of the University and of the Board of Regents; Dean of Students; Director of Libraries; Director of Admissions and Records; two faculty members; and Director of Institutional Research, executive secretary. Chairmen of special University self-study committees also sit as members of the Administrative Committee on Institutional Research during their tenure.

"A general policy of the Office of Institutional Research is to encourage each University unit directly responsible for a given area to assume responsibility for studies of its problems and needs. This policy, it is believed, insures maximum use of research results and at the same time stimulates the professional growth of staff members who make the studies.

"The Office of Institutional Research generally undertakes a study only if the unit directly concerned does not have the necessary staff to do so, or if the study, by its very nature, can best be done by individuals not directly concerned with operational problems, or if it pertains to a University-wide problem that is not the specific concern of any one office. Questions involving who can best do the needed research are resolved by the Administrative Committee on Institutional Research.

"In actual practice, the Office of Institutional Research gives technical advice to practically all University units undertaking studies of their problems and needs, and the degree of participation varies from study to study. In some cases, the Office of Institutional Research determines the research design; in others it may confine its participation only to review of plans and of preliminary drafts of final reports. In the case of self-study committees--i.e., study of college of engineering, study of physical education and inter-collegiate athletics and study of university extension--the Director of Institutional Research participates as an ex officio member."

A third instance is a large institution in the Western region which is presently planning to re-organize its institutional research activities somewhat along these lines. An office of institutional research would be set up which would deal largely with studies of the curriculum, faculty, and students. Many of the studies undertaken by this office would be of a fairly long-range nature and sometimes would be of a fairly technical, sociological or psychological nature, such as how can an institution make a large campus "feel" more like a small campus. In this same institution, some institutional research upon budget, finance, space, and physical plant developments would be done by an office of studies under the vice-president for finance. In other instances, the office of studies would work with other administrative divisions of the university (such as the architect and the business manager) to see to it that such studies were done by the operating divisions and were brought to bear on the long-range plans of the institution.

These three ways of organizing institutional research are, I believe, all workable and there are probably others that will suggest themselves to you. How institutional research is organized at a given college or university will and should depend in large part on the administrative structure of that institution, on its size, its philosophy of operation, and in part on the particular interests and abilities of the various administrative officials at any given time.

The Role of the Business Officer

I therefore wish to comment briefly on the role of college and university business officers in institutional research more in the functional sense than in the organizational sense, since I think the latter needs to be decided on each campus in terms of the specific situation on that campus.

There are three questions that each college and university business officer can well raise about his own institution.

First, what kind of institutional research are being done at my institution?

Secondly, who makes sure that it gets done adequately on an institution-wide basis and that the results are circulated to those members of the staff who can most profit from them?

And finally, what can I as a college and university business officer do to forward the whole area of institutional research at my institution and not only that area in which I am competent and active?

I think these are important questions and ones that are most appropriate for a college business officer to ask. Of all college administrative officers, the business officer is perhaps in the best position to realize the need for an effective program of institutional research to improve both the educational effectiveness and the business efficiency of his institution. The business officer is more apt to realize the need to ask hard questions about the institution's operations and to realize further that on most questions much better data, both current and historical, is needed if a sound decision is to be arrived at.

And, as noted earlier, the college and university business officer historically has been active in institutional research and at most institutions either directly or indirectly accounts for a good percentage of the institutional self-study that does take place.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that college and university business officers may wish to take a positive view of the trend towards central review and coordination of institutional research in colleges and universities.

It is unlikely that many institutions will "centralize" all institutional research in or through the business office any more than they will centralize all institutional research in or through the registrar or the dean of faculty.

Such central review and coordination as is established is, I believe, more likely to be in a separate staff office of the president, not directly involved in line operations, whether that staff office presently exists or is set up for the very purpose of taking an institution-wide view of institutional research.

I believe that college and university business officers should seek to forward this positive kind of centralization through an appropriate institution-wide mechanism for central review and coordination of institutional research on their campus, first, because the college and university business officer will then have a more effective means for putting his own institutional research to the best institution-wide advantage, and secondly because he will have a means of assuring that elsewhere in the institution the institutional self-study does get done that is needed to bring the whole institution to a higher level of academic and business effectiveness.

Much institutional research will seem to you like "old wine in new bottles," but on most campuses the wine needs to be fortified, if I may carry the metaphor that far. "The college and university business officer has every reason to encourage more institutional research, and better-organized institutional research, and I hope you will do so at your institution."

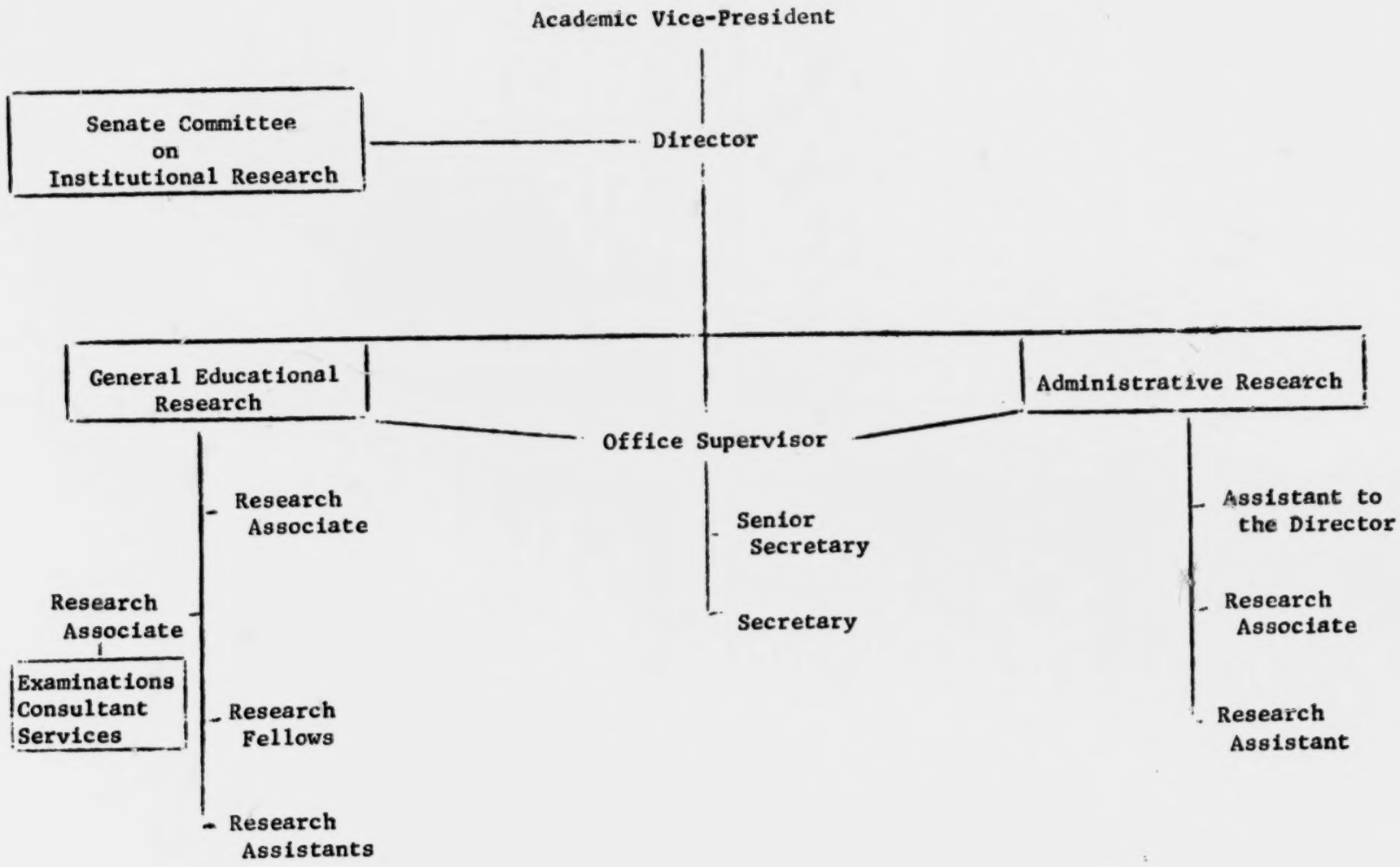

Figure 1: Organization Chart, Bureau of Institutional Research, University of Minnesota

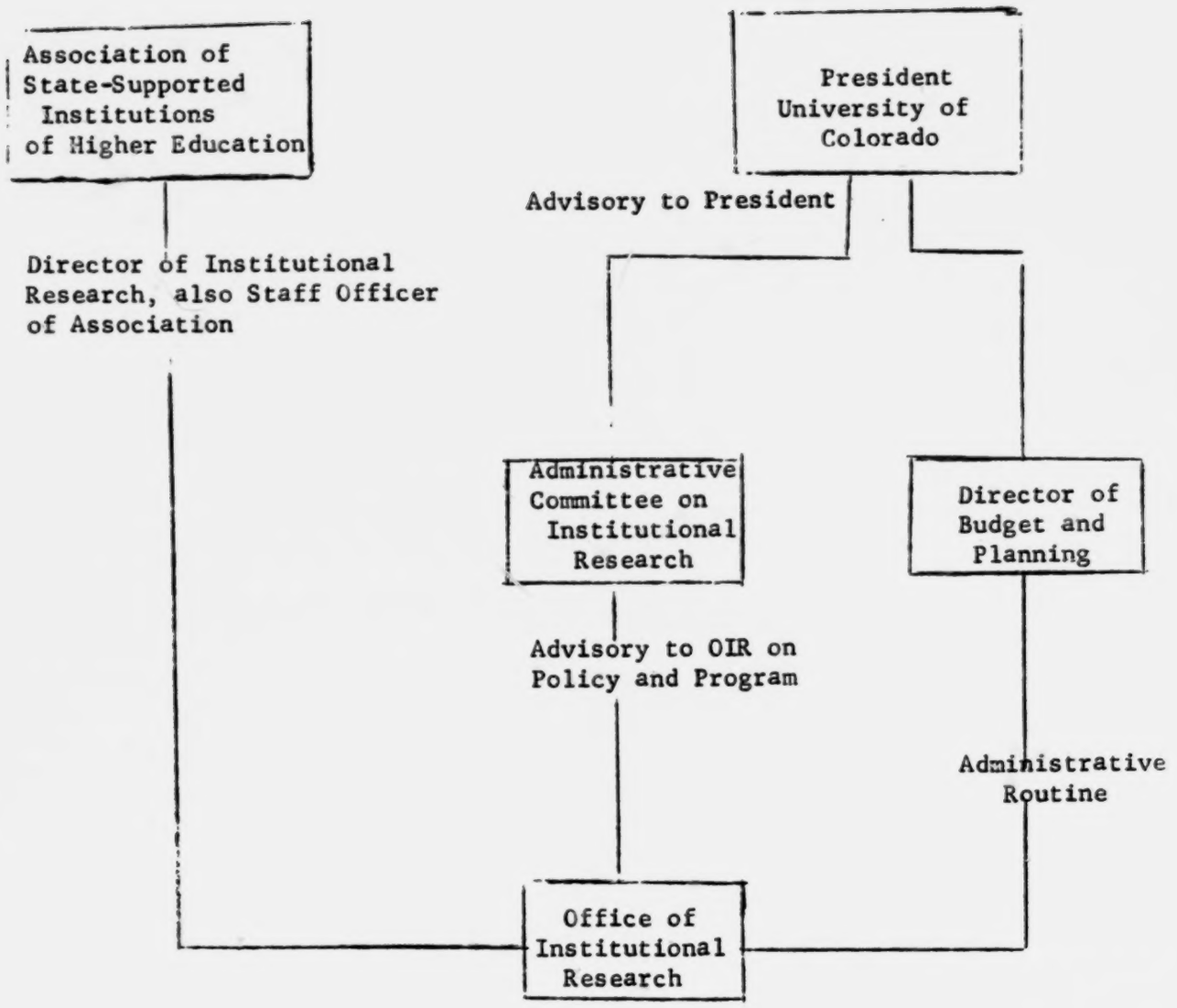
Association of State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education
President University of Colorado
Advisory to President
Director of Institutional Research, also Staff Officer of Association
Administrative Committee on Institutional Research
Director of Budget and Planning
Advisory to OIR on Policy and Program
Administrative Routine
Office of Institutional Research

Figure 2: Office of Institutional Research, University of Colorado

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